



# *The Insider*

[www.senate.mi.gov/switalski](http://www.senate.mi.gov/switalski)

## **Inside State Politics with State Senator Mickey Switalski Senate District 10**

**January 21, 2005**

Welcome to the electronic version of *The Insider*. I would like to take the opportunity to thank you for your support and giving me an opportunity to represent you in the Michigan Senate. It is my sincere hope that this bi-weekly e-newsletter will keep you informed of the happenings in Lansing while staying true to the traditional style of *The Insider*. If you would like to contact me, please feel free to e-mail me at [senmswitalski@senate.michigan.gov](mailto:senmswitalski@senate.michigan.gov) or call me at my Roseville or Lansing office. You can also meet me in person during my constituent hours, coming to a library near you. Call my office and make an appointment or just walk in. See schedule for details.

---

### **The New Legislature**

---

As required by the Michigan Constitution, we began the 93rd session of the Michigan Legislature at noon Wednesday, January 12<sup>th</sup>. The two-year session begins with Michigan still suffering economically, and with the state struggling with its 4<sup>th</sup> straight year of significant financial problems.

The Michigan House of Representatives welcomed 39 new freshman members. They join 51 members who now have two years of experience. The most senior members, who have four years of experience, only number 20.

Think about that. Out of a chamber of 110 members, 90 of them have two years of experience or less. That includes the new House Speaker, who will have to learn quickly how to assimilate and lead the members.

Four years ago, during my second term in the House, I was elected Chairman of the Democratic Caucus. That was a difficult job, and *we* only had 52 *members*. My job was likened to “herding cats.”

Members are each elected by their own constituents, so leaders really are the “first among equals.” Independent representatives don’t like being told what to do, where to go, or how to vote. Sometimes they do the opposite of what you want them to do, just to show you that you aren’t their boss. I remember just trying to enforce some order with the gavel during one caucus, and a colleague berated me, calling me a tyrant and a dictator.

So I wish the new Speaker, and all the leaders in both chambers, the best of luck in the New Year. Michigan has had term limits for six years now, and although most people that work in or with government profess to hate the limits, polls show consistent support among the general public for the practice. In fact, whenever an amendment has been on the ballot in any state to eliminate or extend the

length of term limits, the voters have overwhelmingly rejected it. People like term limits and they don't want to change them.

At the end of each term, speculation rises about the legislature attempting to change the law, but nothing has happened so far. Term limits are like the weather. *Everybody likes to talk about it, but nobody does anything about it.*

Every time politicians start talking about changing the term limit law, the pro-term limit people get all excited and start threatening anyone who dares to question the law. I got a package in the mail from some term limit group, suggesting I'd better sign a pledge, promising that I won't touch the term limit law, if I know what's good for me.

I don't sign pledges, even though I actually like term limits. I probably would never have got to Lansing if it weren't for the term limit law. I do think that politicians brought the term limit law on themselves by giving incumbents advantages like franking privileges and manipulating redistricting to create safe seats for both parties.

But I also think that six years in the Michigan House of Representatives is too short. I think it should be extended to eight years for House members, and everything else left as it is. That would mean a consistent 8-year limit for House of Representatives, Senators, Governors, Secretaries of State and Attorney Generals. Just adding two years to the House would mean a world of difference in terms of the experience and stability of the Chamber, and it wouldn't really violate the spirit of term limits. I tried to explain this to the people who sent me the pledge, but their minds don't appear to be open to a discussion of the merits of my proposal.

They are in good company. Most of the people who want to extend term limits aren't interested in my proposal either. Why do all that work for a measly two-year extension? They want something like 12 years for both chambers, which moves us back to the career politicians that term limits was precisely designed to eliminate.

So it's clear to me that there is no realistic prospect of changing the term limit law, even in the moderate way that I have suggested. So we have to make the best of it.

Right now the Senate is the most senior chamber, and it shows. The leadership team has been in Lansing for 20 years or more. The rest of the Senators have been together for six years, so they've been able to develop good relationships and trust with colleagues on both sides of the aisle. That means a lot when you are trying to pass controversial legislation.

As a consequence, most of the deals between the Governor and the Legislature have been made in the Senate the last two years, with the House, sometimes reluctantly, joining along. Having a little extra influence in making the tough decisions for our state has made the job especially enjoyable the last two years.

I look forward to the chance to help steer Michigan to better times in 2005.

---

## The Governor Calls for Legislative Action

---

Governor Jennifer Granholm sent a letter last week to legislators urging action on several legislative items that were leftover from the previous legislative session. Two of the items (expansion of the bottle bill and SUTA dumping) are bills that I have sponsored for this legislative session.

In her letter addressed to all 110 members of the House and 38 Senators, the Governor called for action on legislation that would:

- Make it easier for Michigan residents to vote by eliminating restrictions on casting an absentee ballot. Current Michigan law limits who may cast absentee ballots to people 60 and older, those who will be out of town on Election Day, those in jail, those that need assistance in getting to the polls, and those that cite religious reasons.
- Close a loophole in the state Unemployment Insurance Tax Act that allows some companies to avoid paying their fair share of the unemployment insurance tax.
- Create standards for the withdrawal of water from our Great Lakes (The Water Legacy Act). Michigan is the only state in the Great Lakes region to not have governing standards for water withdrawals.
- Increase the recycling rate in Michigan by creating a surcharge on solid waste disposed in landfills and expanding the state's bottle deposit law to include juice and water bottles.
- Protect our children's education and safety by raising the state's school drop-out age to 18, allow for the easier transfer of disciplinary records from school to school, and to require young children to be placed in a child booster seat.
- Promote smarter use of our Land by rewriting the Land Division Act and requiring school districts to comply with local zoning ordinances, both recommendations coming from the bipartisan Land Use Leadership Council.
- Approve the five percent pay cut in the Governor and Lieutenant Governor's salary that the State Officers Compensation Commission recommended

The Governor also recently announced that she would focus on the economy during her Feb. 8 State of the State Address and will give her budget recommendation on Feb. 10.

---

## Mickey's TV Insider Show

---

Check out my TV Insider Show coming to a television station near you. Watch me interview local guests about politics, life, issues and concerns to our district.

### **Sterling Heights**

Every Saturday and Sunday at 12:30 p.m.  
(Comcast Channel 5/WOW Channel 10)

### **Clinton Township**

Last week of every month- Sat thru Thurs  
(Comcast Channel 5/WOW Channel 10)

### **Utica**

Every Wednesday at 9 a.m.  
(Comcast Channel 5/WOW Channel 10)

### **Roseville**

Every other Tuesday at 6:05 p.m.  
(Comcast Channel 18)

\*Please note that Sterling Heights/Utica/Clinton Township will show the TV Insider Show on Comcast Channel 5 and Wide Open West Channel 10. Clinton Township will air the TV Insider Show at various times during the last week of every month. Roseville can see the TV Insider Show on Comcast Channel 18.

---

### Coffee Hours

---

\*Please note that since the District Office is in Roseville, I do not have set coffee hours in Roseville. However, I encourage you to visit the Roseville office. We even have a coffee pot. Everyone is welcome to attend the coffee hours and discuss their issues and concerns.

<b>Jan. 31</b> <b>7-9 p.m.</b>	<b>Feb. 7</b> <b>7-9 p.m.</b>
Location: Clinton-Macomb Public Library (40900 Romeo Plank, south of Canal) Clinton Township	Location: Sterling Heights Public Library (40255 Dodge Park) Sterling Heights

---

### Contact My Office

---

**Website:** <http://www.senate.mi.gov/switalski>

**Email:** [senmswitalski@senate.michigan.gov](mailto:senmswitalski@senate.michigan.gov)

#### Lansing Office

Senator Mickey Switalski  
Senate District 10  
410 Farnum  
PO Box 30036  
Lansing, Michigan 48909

(866)303-0110 toll free  
(517)373-7315  
Fax-(517)373-3126

#### District Office

28311 Utica Road  
Roseville, MI 48066

Monday through Friday  
9:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M.

(586)774-2430  
Fax-(586)774-0012